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ABSTRACT

An opinionnaire/questionnaire was developed to discover the types of information superintendents and other administrators look at most carefully when reviewing materials sent by applicants for teaching positions. Responses were obtained from superintendents of urban, rural, and small town school districts in Kentucky. A vast majority of the superintendents regarded confidential references as a valuable source of information on an applicant. References from teacher candidates' superivising teachers were the most prized of all references, followed by those of education professors in the applicants' department or program. Personal references and references from non-education professors in academic departments most related to applicants' majors were the next most valued set of references. Superintendents preferred to have a list of all courses completed by the applicant included with the application materials. They also felt that official transcripts were important. Urban superintendents preferred a student data sheet over a resume developed by the student; superintendents from rural and small town areas preferred a resume. Certifications held by applicants were important to all of the superintendents. Records of professional and non-professional work experience were also considered valuable. Results of the survey are appended in tabular form, and a sample student data sheet and an evaluation form used by the University of Louisville (Kentucky) are included. (JD)

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Hunting For A New Teaching Position
Or How To Get Your Foot
In The Door

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Paper presented at the annual Association of Teacher Educators Conference, Phoenix, Arizona, February 15, 1982.

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Introduction

In the last several years researchers have been interested in how declining enrollments have affected the job market for teachers (Abramowitz & Rosenfeld, 1978; Dearman & Plisko, 1980; Zabalza, Turnbill, & Williams, 1979). Information collected by the U.S. Department of Education and reported by Metz and Crane (1980) shows the discrepancy between those applying for teaching positions and the demand for new teachers. Of the approximately 230,000 newly qualified teachers who applied for teaching positions in 1971, there was a demand for only about 140,000. In 1973 the demand for newly qualified teachers dropped to approximately 120,000, although the number who applied for teaching positions climbed to almost 240,000. This decline in the demand for teachers has continued; by 1981 there was a demand for only approximately 80,000 newly qualified teachers.

Other researchers have tried to document the reasons for this trend by analyzing declining student enrollments in both public and private schools. For instance, Grant (1981) reports a greater than 6 percent decline in enrollment at all levels, elementary through college, since 1975. The Occupational Outlook Handbook (1980-81) supports these findings with statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Labor Statistics which project that elementary student enrollment will drop to approximately 27 million in 1983 from a high of 32 million in 1967. The secondary enrollment figures show a continuous decline from 21 million in 1975 to an estimated 17 million students in 1983.

In the light of these findings about the job possibilities for teachers, it becomes increasingly important for Schools of Education (and for the graduating student) to have a clear understanding of the types of information from,

and about, teacher candidates most wanted by employing school systems. With this understanding, Schools of Education are better able to assist their graduates in being considered for teaching positions. In order to be considered seriously, prospective teachers must present materials and information that will take them beyond the initial stage...hopefully to the interview. This paper will only deal with the initial stage. We hope our training and teacher education programs are strong enough to take the candidates successfully through the interview.

Procedures

An opinionnaire/questionnaire was developed to "tap" the types of information superintendents and other administrators look at most carefully when reviewing the initial materials sent by applicants for positions in their school districts. The topics of the questionnaire included: concerns about the type of references presented (confidential, non-confidential); the importance of references; the number of references needed from various reference sources (education professors, supervising teachers, community references, etc.), the appropriateness of course listings; the importance of transcripts; the use of a student data sheet vs. a resume; the use of a rating scale on a reference form; and an overall evaluation of items usually included in placement credentials sent to prospective employers. After being reviewed by various individuals to determine its face validity and reliability, the instrument was sent to all one hundred seventy-four (174) school districts (county, urban, independent) in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Ninety-six (55.2%) responded to the instrument. This included all the urban school districts, 49.2% (30) of the independent school districts, and 55% (62) of the county districts. It was felt that the percentage of responses was sufficient enough to allow us to generalize our results to all the school districts in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Kentucky is basically a rural/mountainous state. Most school districts are either county or independent, although four (4) are urban. The urban counties have been culled from the county data. For this study, rural districts are designated "county", small town districts are designated "independent", and urban has been given the designation "urban". (See Table 1).

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Insert Table 1 about here
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Results and Discussion

A vast majority of the superintendents perceived a totally confidential reference as the most valuable. All urban (4) and all but one independent district (29) preferred that the applicant waive his or her right to review the recommendation. Only four of the total number of respondents preferred the non-confidential reference; three of these were county school districts.

Respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of references on a 1-5 scale (1- of no importance, ... 3- somewhat important, ... 5- most important/most meaningful). References from the teacher candidate's supervising teachers were by far the most prized of all of the references, followed by "education professors in the applicant's department or program." "Personal references" and "non-education professors in academic departments most related to the applicant's major" were the next valued set of references. The least important reference sources were "non-education professors in academic departments not related to applicant's major", "social agencies", and "religious/church related." Urban superintendents tended to rate the references from education professors in the applicant's department/program and supervising teachers much higher than their counterparts (county, independent). They also tended to rate higher than other superintendents the recommendations from education professors outside the applicant's department or program, non-education professors in academic departments most related to applicant's

major, and social agencies. However, the urban superintendents tended to rate personal references lower than did their counterparts.

Overall it does not appear as though the superintendents need a large number of references. Urban superintendents, however, prefer more references from supervising teachers than do either the independent or county superintendents. The independent superintendents, on the other hand, prefer more personal references than do their urban or county counterparts (refer to Table 2).

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Insert Table 2 about here
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Furthermore, the data clearly indicated that the superintendents would like a list of all courses completed by the applicant included with the application materials. Only seven of the total number of respondents did not feel that a list should be included in the credentials. Within this group, two were independent school superintendents. In addition, the superintendents were asked to determine the importance of official/unofficial transcripts. On a 1-5 scale (1- not important, ..., 5- extremely important), all of the superintendents, regardless of region or type of school district, felt that the transcripts were important. For the county superintendents, the mean was 4.22; for the urban superintendents it was 4.33, and for independent schools, it was 4.19. One hundred (100) percent of all superintendents felt that the transcript was important because all the courses were listed. To a slightly lesser degree, they felt that the transcript was important because grades were included. Eighty-one (81) percent of the county, 100% of the urban, and 87% of the independents felt that the transcript was important because of grades. Far fewer felt that the importance of a transcript was its verification of a degree; only 58% of the county, 75% of the urban, and 70% of the independents felt that a transcript was important for such verification.

Superintendents were then asked whether or not the applicants should submit a resume (developed by the students) or use a student data sheet (see Appendix 1). Fifty-eight (58) percent of the county respondents, 25% of the urban, and 73% of the independents felt that a resume was helpful in making a decision. Forty-two (42) percent of the county, 75% of the urban, and 27% of the independents felt that the data sheet was more important than the resume. According to our results the urban superintendents preferred the student data sheet over the resume; the majority of the others preferred the resume.

Superintendents were also asked about the degree of significance they attached to the rating scale on the University's recommendation form (see Appendix 2). They responded by indicating 1- not significant, ..., 5- most significant. Overall the superintendents tended to be neutral (around 3.00). The urban superintendents had a mean of 4.00, whereas the independents had a mean of 3.13, and the county a mean of 2.97. It appears that the urban superintendents put more credence into the rating scale found on the reference form than did the others.

Table 3 lists various items found in placement papers that typically are sent to superintendents. The respondents in our survey were asked to rate these elements on a 1-5 scale, with 1- of no importance to 5- most important/most meaningful. Our data shows that certifications held by applicants are very important and should be included in the placement materials. References, resumes, and professional work experiences are also very important items that should be included. Independent superintendents rated the resume as being the most important item in the list; in fact, they gave it the highest of all the ratings, as indicated in Table 3. Overall, it would appear that all of the materials are considered at least somewhat helpful to the applicant.

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Insert Table 3 about here
- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Summary and Implications

In order to have an application seriously considered, our findings suggest that teacher applicants should send confidential references to superintendents and waive their right to see these references. Superintendents view confidential references as more straightforward and honest than non-confidential references. It also appears that the most valued references are from supervising teachers (who have worked with the applicants in a student teaching situation or field experience) and education professors in the applicant's department or program. Community references, religious references, and references from professors who are not in the applicant's department or who are not directly related to his/her program are less important to the superintendents.

Additionally, superintendents place importance on the listing of courses and grades. Although grades do not appear to be as important as the listing of courses, one may question whether a superintendent looks only at courses and not grades on a transcript. In our judgment, grades are an important consideration in the hiring process.

Although the number of urban di tricts is quite small, our results show that these officials prefer the more concise data sheet than the more extensive resume. The reverse is true for the smaller school districts. Thus, it is important for the applicants to have a general idea as to the superintendent's or school official's preferences in this area. The preference for a more concise response by the urban superintendents is also shown by their interest in the rating scale on the reference form. Again, the urban school district superintendents put far more significance into the rating form than did any of their counterparts.

It would seem to us that applicants should take great care in preparing their materials for the placement file. Superintendents consider almost all of the items in the placement files as important, although they consider certain items (e.g. references, transcripts, certifications held, professional work experiences) more important than others. According to our findings, non-professional activities were rated the lowest of all of the items found in the materials by all three respondent groups. In order for an applicant to be seriously considered, an important factor is an appropriate placement file. It is also important that the applicant knows what to stress and what not to stress. Great care and effort should be taken in preparing placement credentials--stressing the more important factors without neglecting other areas.

The results of this study can be particularly useful for Schools of Education during the process of counseling students about job application procedures. As noted previously, we feel confident that the strength of our programs will help our graduates through the interview process. The increased understanding provided by this study can enable Schools of Education to help their graduates proceed to the interview stage, thus getting one's foot in the door.

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Table 1: Range of Number of Students and Professional Staff in District Categories

Categories	Students	Professional Staff
County (Rural) N = 62	420 - 11,500	52 - 554
Independent (Small town) N = 30	132 - 5,400	13 - 355
Urban N = 4	9,200; 11,200; 32,000 98,675*	490; 636;2,000; 6,398**

* Listing of student population for all four urban districts
** Listing of professional staff for all four urban districts

Table 2: Importance of References and Numbers Needed

Degree of Importance				Average Number of References Needed		
County	Urban	Independent		County	Urban	Independent
3.97*	4.66*	3.76*	education professors in the applicant's department or program	1.92	1.66	1.92
2.87	3.33	2.89	education professors outside the applicant's department or program	0.94	1.00	1.07
3.17	3.66	3.40	non-education professors in academic departments most related to applicant's major	1.24	1.33	1.30
2.17	2.66	2.24	non-education professors in academic departments not related to applicant's major	0.45	1.00	1.23
4.67	5.00	4.63	supervising teachers	1.31	3.66	1.29
			community references:			
2.12	3.00	2.12	social agencies	0.60	1.00	1.14
2.66	2.66	2.62	religious/church-related	0.71	1.00	1.27
3.25	3.00	3.40	personal	1.38	1.50	1.90

* 5) most important/most meaningful
4) important
3) somewhat helpful
2) of little importance
1) of no importance

Table 3: Importance of Items Found in Placement Papers

	Total	Urban	Independent
References	4.25*	4.33*	4.31*
Course listings	3.81	3.33	3.82
Rating scales	3.20	4.00	2.89
Honors listed	3.25	3.66	3.48
Transcripts provided	4.24	4.00	4.23
Resume	3.87	3.33	4.72
Professional activities	3.51	4.00	3.58
Non-professional activities	3.09	3.33	3.17
Certification held	4.50	4.66	4.33
Student Data Sheet	3.17	3.66	3.44
Work experience:			
Professional	4.30	4.33	4.50
Non-professional	3.47	4.00	3.73

* 5) most important/most meaningful
  4) important
  3) somewhat helpful
  2) of little importance
  1) of no importance

Student Data Sheet

Name _____ Citizenship _____

Present Address _____ Phone ( ) _____
Street

_____
City State Zip Code

Permanent Address _____ Phone ( ) _____
Street

_____
City State Zip Code

Education (in sequence after high school)

Institution	Major	Degree	Completion Date Month	Year

Per Cent College Expenses Earned (numerical, round off to 5; use % sign): Working _____ Scholarship _____

Grade Point Average (A= 4.0) Compute to only 1 decimal.

Freshman Year _____ Sophomore Year _____ Junior Year _____ Senior Year _____

Cumulative (to date) _____ In Major Field _____ Graduate School _____

Honors, Honorary, Professional Organizations, Social Organizations, Sports, Hobbies

Work Experience (Full Time, Part Time, Summer) — List Current, or most recent first, then in reverse order.

Employer	Location	Type of Work	Mo/Yr	Mo/Yr

Type of Work Desired

(1) _____ (3) _____

(2) _____ (4) _____

Location(s) Preferred _____

Date Available _____ Willing to Travel _____

References — Furnished Upon Request

Your signature authorizes the Placement Office to release this information to prospective employers.

Signature _____ Date _____

PLACEMENT SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40208

(Please print or type) Date_____

Evaluation of _____
(Last Name) (First) (Middle or Initial)

Many employers require references (recommendations) from job applicants in their selection process. To that end, may we request a candid evaluation of the above-named person by means of the rating scale and a statement in the space below? This information will be included in the individual's placement file, or held in their possession, depending on its confidentiality, for use by prospective employers. The person being evaluated cannot have access to CONFIDENTIAL evaluations, but may see and possess NONCONFIDENTIAL evaluations.
NOTE: Registrant must check and sign one of the following boxes. If the evaluation is CONFIDENTIAL, preparer sends directly to the Placement Office; if it is NONCONFIDENTIAL, return through the registrant.

☐ CONFIDENTIAL_____

☐ NONCONFIDENTIAL_____

How long have you known the registrant?_____

In what relationship?_____

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	FAIR	POOR	UNKNOWN
PERSONAL APPEARANCE						
JUDGMENT						
TACT						
EMOTIONAL STABILITY						
PERSEVERANCE						
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY						
COPE WITH NEW SITUATIONS						
COOPERATION						
LEADERSHIP						
INITIATIVE						
WRITTEN EXPRESSION						
VERBAL EXPRESSION						

STATEMENT:

SIGNATURE _____ TITLE _____

INSTITUTION _____